



# Musconetcong River News

Winter 2010

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Asbury, New Jersey

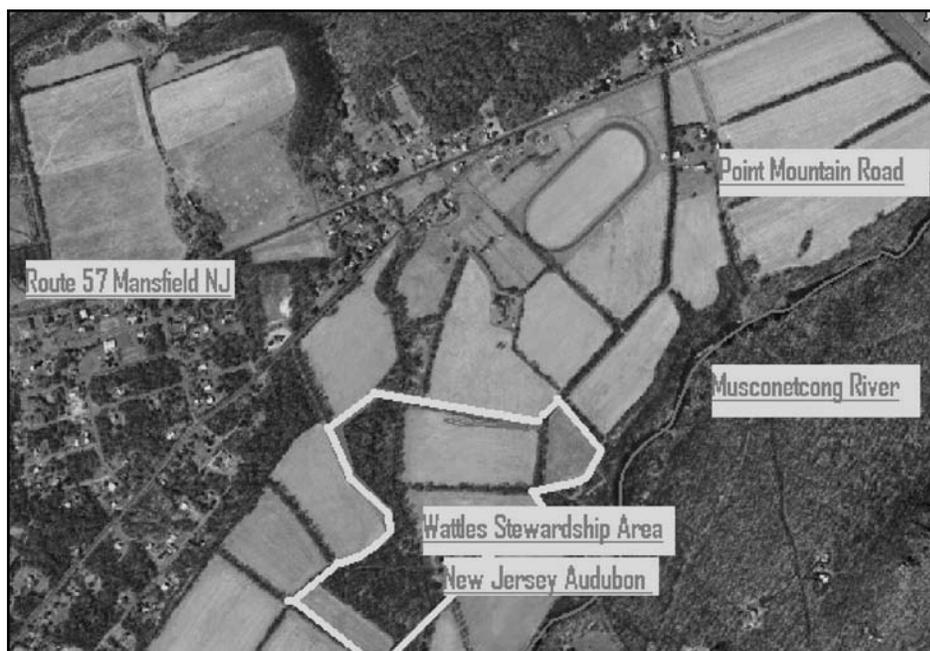
## Preservation of 350 Acres in Mansfield Protects Agricultural Lands and Forested Habit

*By Gylla A. MacGregor,  
Conservation Ecologist,  
New Jersey Audubon Society*

New Jersey Audubon Society (NJAS) and the Department of Environmental Protection have preserved 140 acres of habitat along the Musconetcong River. An additional 212 acres has been preserved by Warren County. The combined acquisition preserves agricultural land, critical wildlife habitat and the Musconetcong River, which is part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

New Jersey Audubon Society's acquisition of 51 acres, which includes a house, barn and garage surrounded by four fields and some woodlands, was made possible both through the generous donation of Mr. Gurdon Wattles and a grant from the DEP's Green Acres Program. The State of New Jersey will acquire 89 acres along the Musconetcong River corridor. Trails from the NJAS portion will connect to the state property.

Tom Gilmore, President of New Jersey Audubon Society stated: "We look forward to the grand opening of the Wattles Stewardship Center in Warren County. For the last decade, our staff has worked closely with the farming community to grow endangered species on private land while still producing a commodity for sale. Through adding warm season grasses to the portfolio of crops, farmers can provide critical habitat for endangered species, produce a marketable crop, and help combat global warming through carbon sequestration. Our



new center will serve as a model and training ground linking conservation successes with sustainable private sector job creation."

This acquisition is just one example of how DEP's Green Acres program is working to preserve open space and wildlife habitat in New Jersey," said DEP Deputy Commissioner John S. Watson, Jr. "In addition to all of the outstanding habitat merits of the site, anglers can now enjoy an extra mile of prime fishing access along the beautiful Musconetcong River."

The NJAS piece will be known as the Wattles Stewardship Center and will house NJAS stewardship staff. The facility will serve as a model for habitat restoration and preservation, and reliance on renewable energy with

the installation of a biomass furnace that will utilize pellets as fuel made from native warm-season grasses.

NJ Audubon is establishing a pilot program highlighting the use of native warm season grasses (WSG) in New Jersey as a viable alternative energy option suitable for widespread application as a commercially renewable bio-fuel crop. This initiative is designed to help diversify the farm economy by establishing a relatively new market for the use of native WSG in New Jersey. The project intends to also promote the additional benefits of cultivating WSG back into the agricultural landscape as habitat for grassland dependant bird species and carbon sequestration.

*Continued on page 2*

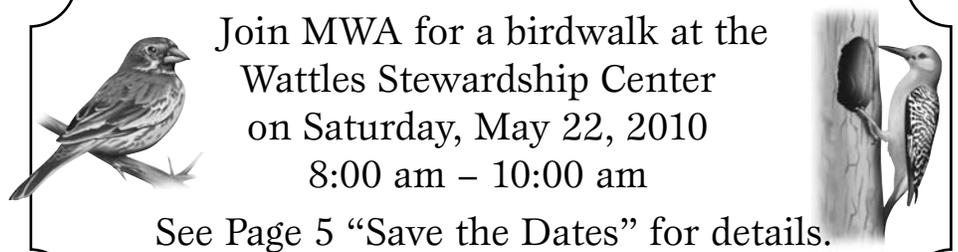
In addition, as with all NJAS properties, the Gurdon Wattles Stewardship Center will be managed to support and improve wildlife habitat, foster environmental education, and will be available to the public for passive recreational use such as wildlife watching, hiking, nature photography, and nature study. Many rare species of wildlife can be found in the area of the Center, including: bobolinks, kestrels, Jefferson salamanders and Eastern box turtles just to name a few.

The preservation of this Warren County property creates a larger patch of contiguous preserved land, connecting with the Musconetcong River Greenway and, across the river, Hunterdon County's Point Mountain

Reservation. Large patches of contiguous land are deemed particularly valuable to preserving plant and animal species, and our ability to study them. Preserving natural lands in this portion of the state is also valuable to maintaining clean drinking water for

many New Jersey residents.

NJAS is excited about their first location in Warren County and looks to build on their relationship with Mansfield Township and promote continued work in Warren, Hunterdon and Sussex Counties. ☺



**Join MWA for a birdwalk at the  
Wattles Stewardship Center  
on Saturday, May 22, 2010  
8:00 am – 10:00 am**

See Page 5 "Save the Dates" for details.

**MUSCONETCONG  
WATERSHED  
ASSOCIATION**

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Asbury, NJ 08802  
**908-537-7060**

[www.musconetcong.org](http://www.musconetcong.org)

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## Lake Hopatcong Water Level Management Plan Review

The Department of Environmental Protection is reviewing the Lake Hopatcong Water Level Management Plan (LHWLMP) with the intent of updating and revising the Plan as needed. A Citizens Advisory Committee was convened by the Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP) to provide local perspective and recommendations to the Department. In order to accomplish this objective, the Citizens Advisory Committee had to be of manageable size. The Department asked each of the various stakeholder groups to designate a representative for the committee. The Committee's role is advisory only, but it is the Department's intent to involve them throughout the decision making process, to solicit suggestions and to promote an understanding of the basis for the LHWLMP.

The advisory committee is made up of representatives from the following: Jefferson Township, Mount Arlington Borough, Roxbury Township, Lake Hopatcong Commission, Lake Hopatcong Commission, Lake Hopatcong Commission, Lake Hopatcong Alliance, Lake Musconetcong Regional Planning Board and the Musconetcong Watershed Association. MWA Trustee and River Watcher Volunteer Monitor Chuck Gullage and MWA Executive Director Beth Styler Barry will attend monthly meetings on behalf of the Musconetcong Watershed Association to ensure that the health of the river is considered in the LHWLMP. ☺

## New Jersey Water Monitoring Coordinating Council

The MWA will be the first watershed association to have a seat on the New Jersey Water Monitoring Coordinating Council. Nancy Lawler, MWA's River Watcher Program Coordinator, will represent the MWA and help to bring the concerns and perspectives of a watershed association to the council. The Council, serves as a statewide body to promote and facilitate the coordination, collaboration and communication of scientifically sound, ambient water quality and quantity information to support effective environmental management. ☺

# Annual Report: State of the Musky

By Nancy Lawler

The River Watcher volunteers report that four assessments have been done at all four River Watcher sites in 2009, and they now have a good understanding of the challenges and questions that each site poses. The volunteers are happy to report that nitrates and pH have not been a problem at any of the sites.

The River Watcher team continues to be concerned, though, about low dissolved oxygen levels at the Lake Hopatcong outfall site, as well as high water temperatures (see graph for dissolved oxygen trends). Low dissolved oxygen and high water temperatures adversely affect the organisms that are most sensitive to changes in water quality and habitat. Stoneflies and mayflies were absent or minimally present here during the April and October assessments.

At Stephens State Park, the river has recovered from the effects of Saxton Falls, and in general, has excellent water quality. The wide riparian buffer and higher alkalinity work together at this site to support the large diversity of aquatic insects, crustaceans, and mollusks that form the foundation of the river ecosystem here. The River Watcher team wants to keep an eye on a large



River Watcher Volunteer Monitors in Stephens State Park use a net to collect a sample of aquatic insects from the Musconetcong River. Varieties and numbers of these insects are an important indicator of water quality.

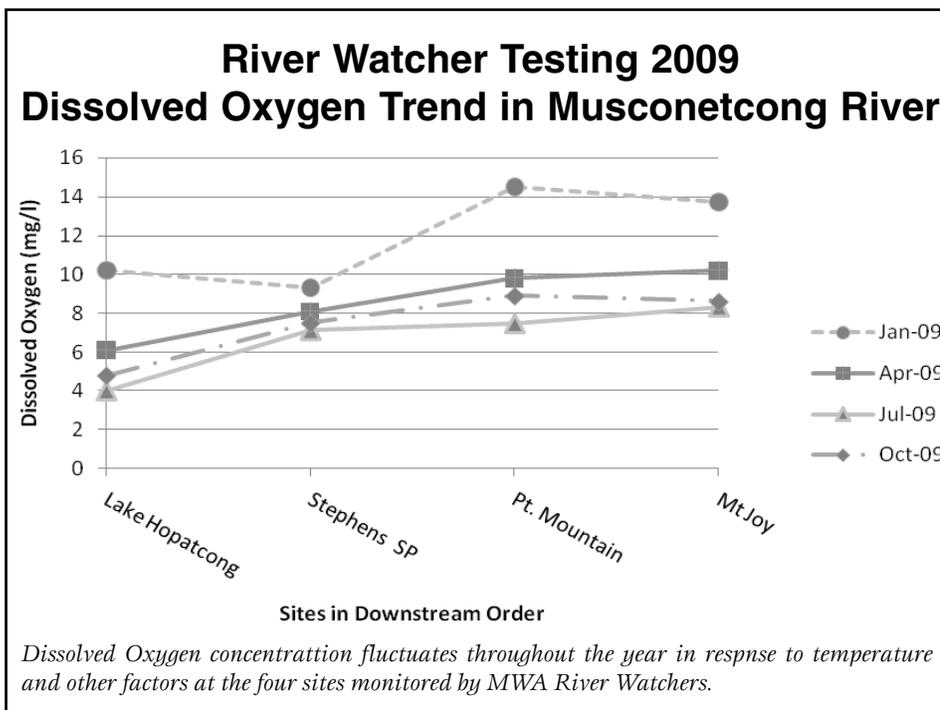
mass of aquatic vegetation that appears to have established itself at the upper part of the stream reach.

The Point Mountain site has been a puzzle for the River Watcher program. Although the river here runs through a preserved area, and the water quality is good, we continually see low numbers

of aquatic organisms. In consultation with local fishermen and scientists, we have concluded that the geology of the site is the primary cause. At the Point Mountain site, the river makes an S-curve and narrows considerably, causing the energy of the river to increase, resulting in bank erosion and a decline in woody debris accumulation. This leads to a decrease in habitat for organisms that might otherwise live there. As this area has been designated a Seasonal Trout Conservation Area, NJDEP Fish & Wildlife is considering a restoration project here so that it can support more aquatic life.

The Mt. Joy Road site is near the confluence of the Delaware River and is located about 600 feet downstream from the Finesville dam. Dissolved oxygen readings tend to be highest at this site and the water temperature is usually colder than the air temperature. While there are some impacts coming from upstream that result in some sediment accumulating on the stream bottom, there is good to excellent diversity of aquatic life.

For the complete report on the River Watcher Volunteer Monitoring Program data, please visit our website. 



*The MWA River Resource Center was open for business soon after each of the big snows of February. Thanks to the continuing generosity of Mark DeCleene, owner of LaserTech Interiors, the River Resource Center was plowed out and the walkways were shoveled before staff arrived.*



*Whoever said winter is dreary and boring? The first-ever River Resource Center nature trail walk, led by MWA Trustee Bill Harclerode (center), was held on January 16th. Hiker Tom Gonzalez (right) shows the group some “spitting cucumber” vines! We also saw a bluebird, kingfisher, fighting black vultures, and the elusive “gray ghost” (mature male harrier)..*



*In December MWA members and others, led by naturalist Royal J. Nadeau, PhD, explored a new trail in the Allamuchy Mountain State Park that leads around Allamuchy Pond. The majority of the 9,000-plus acres of the park were part of the Rutherford and Stuyvesant estates and the old Rutherford Mansion better known as Villa Madonna. Hike participants were given the special opportunity to begin the morning with a guided tour of the inside of the mansion.*

*The annual MWA post-Thanksgiving hike to the lookout on Point Mountain was held on a beautiful brisk and sunny morning. What a pleasure it was to look down on over 350 acres of newly preserved land in Mansfield Township.*

*Warren County purchased a parcel that will be divided into a 97-acre farm and a 122-acre farm, which are expected to be auctioned this year. The NJ Green Acres program acquired a 96-acre portion that runs along the Musconetcong River where the public will be able to enjoy hiking and fishing. The remaining 51 acres was purchased by the New Jersey Audubon Society where the organization will open the Wattles Stewardship Center.*



# SAVE THESE DATES!

**Saturday, March 6, 2010**

## **Hike at Cataract Park, Schooleys Mountain Road**

This park in Washington Township offers excellent winter views as well as a waterfall and an accessible abandoned iron mine. Hikers will explore Cataract Falls, a beautiful little waterfall nestled in a hidden gorge that, in the winter, freezes over in a breathtaking ice formation. From Route 57 east toward Hackettstown, turn right on Schooleys Mountain Road. There is a pull off parking lot on the left hand side while the road ascends. For more detailed directions please visit [www.washtwpmorris.org/departments/recreation/directions/cataract.html](http://www.washtwpmorris.org/departments/recreation/directions/cataract.html)

**Saturday, April 17, 2010**

## **18th Annual Spring Clean Up**

Come out and help at the Annual Spring Clean Up. Each year we count on MWA members, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Trout Unlimited members, local citizens and kids from environmental clubs to help us pull tons of trash from local roadsides and stream banks. Afterwards participants gather at noon at the MWA's River Resource Center in Asbury for hot dogs and sodas. E-mail [adrienne@musconetcong.org](mailto:adrienne@musconetcong.org) or call (908) 537-7060 for information.

## **River Watcher Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Training**

**March 27th 9a.m.-12pm(Advanced class); 1pm-4pm (Beginner class)**

**In-class training at Warren Community College 475 State Route 57 West Washington, NJ**

**April 10th 9am-12pm(Advanced); 1-4pm (Beginners)**

**Field training at the MWA River Resource Center 10 Maple Avenue, Asbury NJ**

Become a River Watcher! Come to the MWA annual training for volunteers and work to protect our streams by collecting important scientific information about the health of our beautiful river! River Watchers collect chemical, biological and visual data four times during the year at four specific sites along the Musconetcong. The first session is the in-class portion; this session focuses on background information on river ecology, the indicators we use to determine the health of the river, and how to perform the tests! The second session is the field portion; during this session we will train you how to assess habitat and to identify organisms that tell you that the river is healthy. All levels of expertise are welcome—all you need is a love of working outdoors!

**Sunday May 2, 2010 10th Annual MWA Run/Walk for the River**

Join us to either walk or run in this 4.0-mile event. Runners start at 10:00 a.m. and walkers begin at 9:45. The course is a scenic loop in beautiful Asbury, New Jersey. Runners will pass streams, pastures, historic buildings and the beautiful Musconetcong River on this mostly flat fast course. Rain or Shine! Come out and run or walk at the Musconetcong Watershed Association's largest annual fundraiser. Free bagels and bottled water and prize drawing for participants. Registration and parking at Asbury Fire Co. at 410 Old Main Street, Asbury 08802

**Saturday, June 12, 2010 Hike at Wildflower Walk at Allamuchy Pond Trail**

Join MWA as we explore this new trail in the Allamuchy Mountain State Park, led by naturalist Royal Nadeau. The trail leads around Allamuchy Pond and is relatively wide and level. With help from our leader we will look for and identify wildflowers. MWA members are free, nonmembers are asked to donate \$3. Bring a snack, water and binoculars if you'd like. All are welcome, novice and expert alike. Call (908) 537-7060 or e-mail [beth@musconetcong.org](mailto:beth@musconetcong.org) for details, directions or to register. For directions to the Allamuchy Hike, please go to GoogleMaps and type "Villa Madonna, NJ" in the destination box.

**Note:** If you are not receiving e-mail reminders for these events it means that we do not have a current e-mail address. If you'd like to receive reminders and occasional "Musky News Briefs" please contact [beth@musconetcong.org](mailto:beth@musconetcong.org).

- ◆ Young Eyes On The River
  - ◆ New Jersey Water Monitoring Coordinating Council
  - ◆ Lake Hopatcong Water Level Management Plan Review
  - ◆ Mansfield Preserved
  - ◆ Agricultural and Forested Habitat Along the Musconetcong River in What's Inside:
- Musconetcong River News**



Asbury, NJ 08802  
 PO Box 113



## The Musconetcong Watershed Association

The Musconetcong River Valley is rich in scenery, history, natural resources, and recreational opportunities. The river rises up in Lake Hopatcong - New Jersey's largest spring-fed lake - and is shadowed by 1,000-foot Highland ridges and slices through a deep, limestone river valley, flowing swiftly to the Delaware River. Along the way the "Musky" passes by state and county parks, bustling towns, vital industries, historic villages, and some of the most productive farmland in the state.

The Musconetcong Watershed Association (MWA) is a non-profit organization formed in 1991 to protect and enhance the Musconetcong River and its related resources through advocacy and environmental education programs, scientific research and river restoration projects. The MWA scope spans the 158 square-mile Musconetcong River Watershed, and includes portions of four counties, and all or portions of 25 municipalities. The Musconetcong River became part of the National Wild and Scenic River System in 2006.

MWA members are part of a network of individuals, families and organizations who care about the Musconetcong River and its watershed. They are kept informed about issues concerning the river and its related resources by receiving quarterly issues of the *Musconetcong River News*.

## MWA Membership Application

Please enroll me as a member of the Musconetcong Watershed Association in which I will receive membership benefits and publications. I have enclosed a check payable to **MWA** for the membership category listed below:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Student          | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Sustainer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Family           | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Steward   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Supporter        | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Champion  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 + Life Member |  |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*Mail to:*

**Musconetcong Watershed Association**  
 PO Box 113, Asbury, NJ 08802